

House Approves \$17.1 Billion in Spending Cuts

Bill Trims Housing, Education, Environment Programs; Fate Uncertain in Senate

By Dan Morgan
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The House, concluding two days of often bitter, partisan debate, yesterday passed a \$17.1 billion spending cuts bill that Republicans acclaimed as the first step in getting the nation's fiscal health in order.

Moments before the final vote, the bill, which cuts unspent appropriations from the current and earlier budgets, was caught up in a controversy over whether the savings would be used to offset revenue lost to the government as a result of tax cuts. The uncertainty cost the support of at least a dozen fiscally conservative Democrats who had been expected to vote for the bill, but it still passed by a comfortable 227 to 200. Six Republicans voted no; six Democrats voted yes.

The rescission bill makes cuts in dozens of programs, particularly low-income housing, environmental, education and job-training programs. At the same time it makes available \$5.4 billion to pay mostly for disaster relief in California and 39 other states.

Republicans used procedural tactics to block votes on several key amendments, including one offered by a GOP member, Rep. Christopher Shays (Conn.), to restore \$186 million for a housing program for AIDS sufferers. But a bipartisan effort defeated a proposal backed by GOP conservatives to slash more funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The bill goes to the Senate, where there will be pressure to match the total spending reductions approved by the House. However, the Senate is certain to put its imprint on the bill targeting different programs, possibly including defense.

White House Chief of Staff Leon E. Panetta said yesterday that if the spending cut package reaches President Clinton's desk in

its present form, "there's no question . . . that the president, in fact, would veto it."

In the House, Democrats repeatedly charged that Republicans were being "mean-spirited" in cutting programs for the poor, sick, young and elderly. But House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.) pleaded with House members to keep focused on the urgent need for budget cutting. "Americans are compassionate people. We're so compassionate we're all broke."

But the agonizing choices involved were dramatized yesterday when Shays sought to restore funds for the Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS program and take a like sum from the space program so as not to increase the deficit.

"This cause matters to me," said Shays, who related how the widow of former representative Stewart McKinney, an AIDS sufferer whose seat Shays now holds, had dedicated herself after McKinney's death to finding homes for those with the disease.

The attempt was blocked on a procedural motion by Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), whose district near Houston depends heavily on NASA facilities. With Republicans and Democrats rising to support the amendment, it had appeared headed for passage before DeLay intervened.

When it was all over, leaders in both parties claimed significant gains.

The debate appeared to have helped Democrats find a voice and a theme: that of protecting poor and working-class Americans, and fighting Republican tax cuts for the wealthy.

"The first significant thing was what they cut. The second was what they didn't," said Rep. David R. Obey (D-Wis.), asserting that the GOP had hit the poor but avoided targeting programs for the affluent and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

But Republicans proved they had the

votes and the determination to push through cuts such as those for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, though heavy lobbying by veterans groups forced them to back away from a modest cut in funding for veterans' medical facilities.

This bill, and an appropriations measure in the Senate, also showed that the appropriations process could be a vehicle to push the broader GOP legislative agenda of reducing the size and control of the federal government.

The Senate, deliberating on a defense spending measure, voted 60 to 38 in favor of an amendment by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Tex.) that imposes a moratorium on spending by the Fish and Wildlife Service for listing endangered species and habitats.

The House bill rescinds \$2 million for running endangered species programs. Time ran out before Rep. David M. McIntosh (R-Ind.) could introduce an amendment to cut an additional \$17.5 million.

Mandates Bill Goes to Clinton

Associated Press

The House completed the second major piece of legislation under the "Contract With America" yesterday as it sent the president a bill to curb federal orders to states.

The bill requiring the federal government to pay for carrying out many regulations it imposes on states and localities passed by a 394 to 23 vote. All no votes were from Democrats. The unfunded mandates bill was approved by the Senate on Wednesday and President Clinton is expected to sign it. Congress must pay for any regulation that would cost states and local governments more than \$50 million. The bill does not apply to legislation protecting constitutional rights, civil rights or anti-discrimination law.